

VZCZCXRO1629
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DE RUEHFR #1104 0801638
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 211638Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5819
INFO RUEHSB/AMEMBASSY HARARE IMMEDIATE 0414
RUEHRN/USMISSION UN ROME IMMEDIATE 0009
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 2633
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 1178
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 001104

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/21/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [UNSC](#) [UNO](#) [IR](#) [KNNP](#) [ZI](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: FRANCE/ZIMBABWE: LOOKING FOR AFRICANS TO TAKE THE
LEAD

REF: A. STATE 33357 B. STATE 34009 C. USUN 229

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah B. Rosenblatt. Reas
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¶1. (C) MFA interlocutors report a shift in French thinking on Zimbabwe and greater readiness to engage and bring pressure to bear on the regime through multilateral fora. France nonetheless emphasizes the importance of getting Africans into the lead and holds out hopes that SADC will take a strong stance at a March 23 meeting. In bilateral contacts, neighboring governments of Zimbabwe have been scathing in their criticism of the repressive regime, MFA AF DAS-Equivalent for Southern Africa Jean-Claude Brunet told Africa Watcher during a March 21 meeting. Brunet sensed that South Africa, as well as other SADC members, could be ready to come off the starting block in criticizing Mugabe. He suggested the regional visit by World Bank Chairman Wolfowitz could also be helpful in reinforcing African outrage at the excesses of the Zimbabwean leader.

¶2. (C) Brunet indicated that the EU will introduce the issue at the March 28th general session of the UN Human Rights Council and seek a consensus declaration. It was imperative, he warned, not to isolate African members by framing the debate in terms of Western pressure. On that count, Brunet regretted recent confrontations driven by the EU and the USG, while noting that France had dutifully kept rank with its partners. He singled out the campaign to block selection of a qualified female Zimbabwean official for an administrative position at the WFP in Rome, as well as the IMF decision to continue the suspension of Zimbabwe's voting rights even though the country had cleared its arrears.

¶3. (C) In a brief aside on unhelpful and dilatory amendments by South Africa in UNSC negotiations on Iran, Brunet shared the MFA view that Pretoria, with its aspirations to a Permanent UNSC seat, sought above all to lay down a marker that the old house rules for Elected Member should not apply. For Brunet, who formerly negotiated non-proliferation issues on the French UNSC delegation, South Africa had no real beef with the draft P-5 resolution, and would likely yield after obtaining what it considered due process.

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